

FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS



2021 INDIVIDUAL / ONLINE GUIDE



ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION
Called to Tend to a Flourishing Garden of Life

FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS

2021 Individual / Online Program Guide

We are cognizant that due to Covid restrictions, some parishes and groups may be more comfortable meeting online. This version of the 2021 Feast of St. Francis Program is for use in online meetings (i.e. Zoom) or for individual use. If you need more background/instructions you can check the [in-person Program](#) and [Facilitator Guide](#) (meant for in-person programs, but may contain good background information and helpful scripts)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2021 Feast of St. Francis program, “Ecological Conversion: Called to Tend to a Flourishing garden of Life.” For the next 90 minutes, we (you) will focus on defining “eco-conversion, why Pope Francis has called the global church to a 7-year journey to sustainability, and bringing the encyclical, *Laudato Si’* to life. We (you) will also brainstorm how you and/or your community (name your community) may join this important global church effort.

Catholic Climate Covenant thanks you for joining in celebrating the Feast of St. Francis and we hope that your family, parish, school, diocese, religious community, or other Catholic institution begins to discern how best to engage with Pope Francis’ call to join him in a 7-year sustainability and “eco-conversion” journey through the Vatican’s *Laudato Si’* Action Platform.

OPENING PRAYER (1 MINUTE)

(Read in unison)

Prayer for Ecological Conversion

God of the sun and the moon, of the mountains, deserts and plains,
 God of the mighty oceans, of rivers, lakes and streams
 God of all creatures that live in seas and fly in the air
 of every living thing that grows and moves on this sacred Earth.

We are formed by Christ into Your People,
 called to bring the world into Your marvelous light.

As the Body of Christ, we are messengers of ecological vocation.
 We are entrusted with caring for this Earth which You have created.
 Help us to love and respect it; to repair what we have damaged;
 to care for what You have made good and holy.

Give us the wisdom and the passion to change our minds, our hearts and our ways.

Let us be mustard seeds in our world bringing about ecological conversion which grows and spreads to every corner of the Earth.

For our sake now and for every generation which is to come.

We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

~Catholic Earthcare Australia, 2002 (used with permission)



READINGS (10 MINUTES)

Online Group: *Ask for volunteers for each reading*

Reading #1

Parable of the Mustard Seed ~Mark 4:30-32

"He said, "To what shall we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use for it? It is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade."

Reading #2

The theme of this program comes from this Pope John XXIII quote:

"We are not on earth to guard a museum, but to tend to a flowering garden of life."

Reading #3

A reading from *Laudato Si'* 217

The ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion. Christians all need an "ecological conversion", whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them.

Reading #4

Pope St. John Paul II in his General Audience Address on 17 January 2001 was the first Pontiff to use the term "ecological conversion".

"Unfortunately, if we scan the regions of our planet, we immediately see that humanity has disappointed God's expectations. Man, especially in our time, has without hesitation devastated wooded plains and valleys, polluted waters, disfigured the earth's habitat, made the air unbreathable, disturbed the hydrogeological and atmospheric systems, turned luxuriant areas into deserts and undertaken forms of unrestrained industrialization, degrading that "flowerbed" - to use an image from Dante Alighieri (*Paradiso*, XXII, 151) - which is the earth, our dwelling-place.

We must therefore encourage and support the "ecological conversion" which in recent decades has made humanity more sensitive to the catastrophe to which it has been heading. Man is no longer the Creator's "steward", but an autonomous despot, who is finally beginning to understand that he must stop at the edge of the abyss.... At stake, then, is not only a "physical" ecology that is concerned to safeguard the habitat of the various living beings, but also a "human" ecology which makes the existence of creatures more dignified, by protecting the fundamental good of life in all its manifestations and by preparing for future generations an environment more in conformity with the Creator's plan."

Reading #6

Elizabeth Johnson, Professor Emerita of Theology at Fordham University and a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph, writes:

". . . We all share the status of creaturehood; we are all kin in the evolving community of life now under siege; our vision must be one of flourishing for all. The immediate aim is to establish and protect healthy ecosystems where all creatures, including poor human beings and plants and animals being driven to extinction, can thrive. The longer-term goal is a socially just and environmentally sustainable society in which the needs of all people are met and diverse species can prosper, onward to an evolutionary future that will still surprise.... guide us at this critical time of Earth's distress, to practical and critical effect": A flourishing humanity on a thriving planet rich in species in an evolving universe, all together filled with the glory of God."

(Elizabeth Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love*, Bloomsbury: London, 2014, pp. 285-86).



SILENT REFLECTION TIME (8 MINUTES)

Please take the next 8 minutes to silently reflect on the readings. You will need paper and pen/pencil to jot down your thoughts.

- What stood out/impacted you in these readings?
- How does the Parable of the Mustard Seed speak to you as you consider the need to work to ensure that we “cultivate a flowering garden of life” and a “flourishing humanity on a thriving planet rich in species in an evolving universe, all together filled with the glory of God”?
- What common thread/message do you see in the readings by Pope John XXIII, Pope St. John Paul II, and Pope Francis (in *Laudato Si'*)?
- How can people of faith work toward what Prof. Johnson states as our “longer-term goal of “a flourishing humanity on a thriving planet rich in species in an evolving universe, all together filled with the glory of God”?

VIDEO (15 MINUTES)

*Watch a short video that will explain the concept of “eco-conversion”; an introduction to the Ignatian Eco-examen as part of a discernment process; how one religious community is engaging with the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform; and a prayer from Pope Francis that makes us consider the intertwined cry of the Earth and cry of the poor in this pandemic era.*



IGNATIAN ECOLOGICAL EXAMEN (15 MINUTES)

Online Group: *You may need to use the Zoom Breakout Room feature for small group (3-5 people) discussion. If that is not possible, have people reflect individually and have them write their responses. They may wish to share via the chat feature.*

You will have 15 minutes to reflect and discuss within your group these questions that are part of the Ignatian Ecological Examen.

Individual: *Reflect and then plan to discuss with family, friends, others in your community.*

Using the questions of the Ignatian Ecological Examen, begin to reflect on how we are called by God to this journey of eco-conversion. In your small group, take turns reading each statement and question out loud. Reflect on each question individually and then share with your group. Take each question one at a time. Remember that the Ecological Examen isn't a one-time exercise, but an ongoing reflection that over time may lead to "conversion."

1. Gratitude

I give thanks to God for creation and for being wonderfully made.

Where did I feel God's presence in creation today?

2. Awareness

I ask for the grace to see creation as God does – in all its splendor and suffering.

Do I see the beauty of creation and hear the cries of the earth and the poor?

3. Understanding

I ask for the grace to look closely to see how my life choices impact creation and the poor and vulnerable.

What challenges or joys do I experience as I recall my care for creation?

How can I turn away from a throwaway culture and instead stand in solidarity with creation and the poor?

4. Conversion

I ask for the grace of conversion toward ecological justice and reconciliation.

Where have I fallen short in caring for creation and my brothers and sisters?

How do I ask for a conversion of heart?

5. Reconciliation

I ask for the grace to reconcile my relationship with God, creation and humanity, and to stand in solidarity through my actions.

How can I repair my relationship with creation and make choices consistent with my desire for reconciliation with creation?

6. Prayer

I offer a closing prayer for the earth and the vulnerable in our society.

Pick one word that summarizes your prayer and write it on the poster paper. Place the poster paper around your room.

Source: <https://ignatiansolidarity.net/blog/2017/10/04/ignatian-ecological-examen> and ecoexamen.org.



ACTIVITY/IES (35 MINUTES)

Online Group: (Follow your facilitator instructions).

As a full group, we will now complete a short advocacy activity (or you can do it on your own after the program) and (or) continue the discernment process we started with the Ignatian Ecological Examen.

If doing this as an individual, plan to meet with others as you discern how best to engage with the Laudato Si' Action Platform.

1) Advocacy Activity (5 MINUTES)

Catholic Climate Covenant invites you to send this [Climate Action message](#) to your Members of Congress and President Biden. Your message will be delivered immediately to Members of Congress and President Biden (as an email or fax.) Your message will be counted as part of the total number of individuals signing the climate action petition.

Sign the email to Congress and President Biden asking that the United States show global leadership on climate action during the coming COP 26 meeting in Glasgow in early November:

<https://catholicclimatecovenant.salsalabs.org/catholicclimateactionfosf>

You can also access the advocacy action on your smartphones with the QR code below.

Want to do more? You can seek institutional signatures from you pastor, bishop, or another Catholic institutional leader! The Covenant will deliver the related [Catholic institutional letter](#) by late October to Members of Congress and President Biden. This could be part of your LSAP goal work!



2) Laudato Si' Action Platform Discernment Process (30 MINUTES)

This “discernment process” is the **first step** in deciding if and how your community will respond to His Holiness’ call to join him in the 7-year sustainability and eco-conversion journey. If your community has already decided to participate in LSAP, use the time to talk about possible future actions and activities.

Pope Francis invites us to join him in a seven-year journey to sustainability and “eco-conversion.” To assist us in the journey, the Vatican has created the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform (LSAP) to bring *Laudato Si'* to life in our communities. Pope Francis called it “a seven-year journey that will see our communities committed in different ways to becoming totally sustainable, in the spirit of integral ecology.”

Read the following information (you may choose to ask for volunteer readers) and as a full group begin the discernment process of how we, as a (family, parish, diocese, school, religious community, etc.) might engage with the Laudato Si' Action Platform.



What is the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform (LSAP)?

The LSAP is a Vatican website that offers:

- *Laudato Si'* Plans, which your institution, community, or family can use to discern and implement your response to *Laudato Si'*. (Coming in October 2021)
- Guidance on actions that help build a better future through the *Laudato Si'* Goals
- Recognition of your progress
- Resources and guidance on ways to take action, including metrics and recognition of achievements.
- Ways to connect directly with other participants with inspiring stories of people who are taking action.

What is GodsPlanet.us website?

To further assist you, Catholic Climate Covenant and its partners have created a United States Catholic community centered campaign, Godsplanet.us where you can find U.S. focused resources, stories, an events calendar, advocacy opportunities, a small grants program, and campaign communication resources to help your U.S. Catholic community or family engage with the LSAP.

The *Laudato Si'* Action Platform identifies **Seven Sectors** within the global Catholic Church, you can participate in the LSAP in one (or a couple) of sectors:

- Family (or individual)
- Parish and diocese
- Educational Institutions
- Healthcare Institutions
- Organizations and groups
- Economic Entities
- Religious Orders



Which sector best describes our community?

The *Laudato Si'* Action Platform identifies Seven Goals

Read this section which describes the seven goals of the LSAP

The **LSAP includes seven goals**, each with possible actions you can take to achieve each goal. Look at the following chart of the LSAP 7 goals and **possible** actions (these actions are examples and not the only ones you can undertake!) The LSAP (after it's fully launched on October 4th, 2021) will have a longer list of actions and accompanying resources for your use.



1) Response to the Cry of the Earth

- greater use of clean renewable energy and reducing fossil fuels in order to achieve carbon neutrality
- promoting carbon footprint reduction efforts
- encouraging efforts to protect and promote biodiversity
- guaranteeing access to clean water/air for all
- reflecting with the [Ecological Examen](#) or another spiritual guide





2) Response to the Cry of the Poor

- defending human life from conception to death and all forms of life on Earth, with special attention to vulnerable groups such as people of color, communities living in poverty, indigenous communities, immigrant communities, or children at risk through slavery



3) Ecological Economics

- promoting ethical investments, sustainable production, fair trade, and ethical consumption
- divesting from fossil fuels and any economic activity harmful to the planet and the people
- reinvesting in renewable energy
- Check if [Catholic Energies](#) can assist your community go solar and/or be more energy efficient



4) Adoption of Simple Lifestyles

- moderation in the use of resources and energy
- avoidance of single-use plastic
- adoption of a more plant-based diet and reduced meat consumption
- reducing food waste
- greater use of public transport and avoid polluting modes of transportation
- Joining the [Ignatian Solidarity Network](#) mini challenges or the [Sisters of Mercy Meatless Mondays](#) challenges



5) Ecological Education

- re-thinking and re-designing educational curricula and educational institution reform in the spirit of integral ecology to create ecological awareness and action
- promoting the ecological vocation of young people, teachers and leaders of education
- Reading a book by a favorite eco-theologian
- Organizing a *Laudato Si'* study



6) Ecological Spirituality

- recovering a religious vision of God's creation
- encouraging greater contact with the natural world in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy and gratitude
- promoting creation-centered liturgical celebrations
- developing ecological catechesis, prayer, retreats, formation



7) Community Involvement and Participatory Action

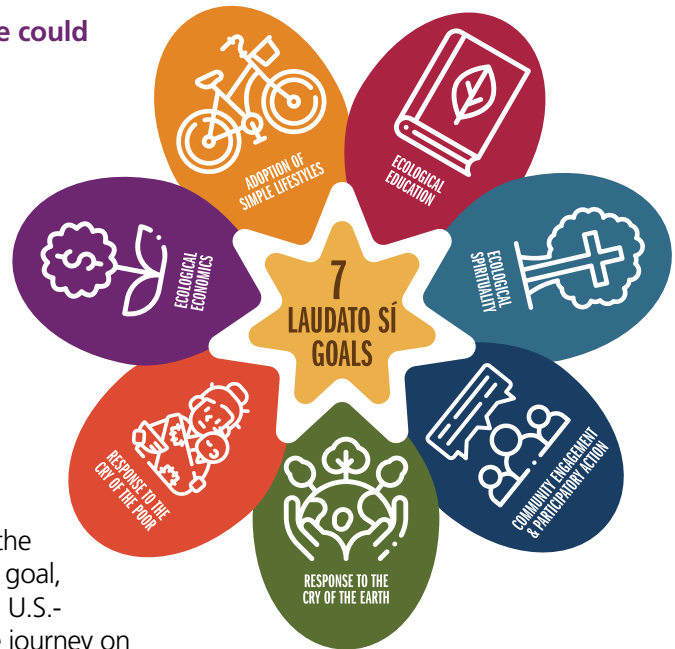
- promoting advocacy campaigns such as the [Climate Action Catholic Institutional Letter](#) and [Individual Petition](#) that are part of this program's advocacy activity.
- encouraging rootedness in local territory and neighborhood ecosystems



Brainstorm the types of activities listed above that we could do as we begin (or continue) our eco-conversion and sustainability journey.

Which of the LSAP goals that are listed above would you like to tackle as a family or as a parish, diocese, educational institution, or religious community (or any other of the 7 sectors)?*

***NOTE:** The LSAP website will (as of October 4th) have sample Laudato Si' plans and resources to help your community. Check Godsplanet.us for examples of how other Catholics in the United States are embarking on the LSAP 7-year journey. **You need only pledge your commitment to embark in the seven-year sustainability journey at the moment at the LSAP website here.** Later, come back to the LSAP and delve into the action plans and different footsteps you can take under each goal, with resources to help you on your journey. And you will find U.S.-based resources, inspiration and networks to help you on the journey on the website Godsplanet.us.



REGISTER YOUR COMMITMENT!

Are we (you) ready to pledge our commitment to enter into a 7-year sustainability journey? If we (you) aren't ready, can we(you) commit to gather again (or with others) to continue this discussion?

Are you, your family/community ready to respond to His Holiness' call to embark on a 7-year eco-conversion and sustainability journey? Pledge your commitment to enter into this seven-year journey on the LSAP website by completing this [registration form](#) to pledge your and/or your community's commitment to develop your *Laudato Si'* Plan. You can register and pledge as any of the seven sectors listed above.

TAKE ACTION!

How will you/we organize to take action?

- **Consider forming a "Creation Care Team"** and register it with Catholic Climate Covenant. Creation Care Teams (in parishes, dioceses, educational institutions, religious communities) are the best way to organize and inspire your community to take action on care for creation and care for the poor!
- **Already have a Creation Care Team?** You are several steps ahead of others in your eco-conversion journey! The actions your team has already accomplished can count toward your community's LSAP journey's metrics.
- Remember to check Catholic Climate Covenant's [resources](#) and [programs](#) for information and assistance in your care for creation efforts, and [share your creation care stories and actions here on Godsplanet.us](#)

CONCLUSION AND CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you for participating in the 2021 Feast of St. Francis program. Today you took an important step in discerning our journey to eco-conversion and living Laudato Si'. Let us continue praying for God's guidance as we live in more sustainable and just ways.



Closing Prayer (2 MINUTES)

Facilitator reads the part marked "L" and participants join for "ALL".

L: *Creator God, source of all life,
We praise and thank you for the many gifts of this day.
For the blessing of your presence*

ALL:

- In each star in the sky and every flower in the field;
- In each creature who roams our common home and every grain of wheat that nourishes;
- In each drop of water which sustains us and every person who loves and cares for us.

L: *God of mercy and compassion, forgive us for the times that we fail to recognize your presence among us.*

ALL:

- Forgive us our blindness to the daily miracle of creation
- Forgive us our deafness to the cries of Earth and those made poor by our greed
- Forgive us our hardness of heart that separates us one from another

L: *God of abundance, we pray, give us the grace to know that we are ONE in you.
Give us the grace*

ALL:

- To welcome your creatures abandoned and forgotten
- To care for our common home; and
- To live in right relationship
with you, our God,
with neighbors near and far, and
with all of your wondrous creation.
Give us the grace to become your beloved community.

L: *Gracious God, we ask this through the power of your Great and Holy Spirit whose breath gives life to the world.*

All: Amen

~Ann Scholz, SSND (used with permission)

Thank you for participating in the 2021 Feast of St. Francis Program
For more information visit: CatholicClimateCovenant.org



ADDENDUM

Here are the website links mentioned in the program that you may wish to visit after the program:

- Catholic Climate Covenant: catholicclimatecovenant.org
- Vatican's *Laudato Si'* Action Platform: laudatosiactionplatform.org
- Godsplanet.us: godsplanet.us
- For more information on the Ignatian Ecological Examen: ignatiansolidarity.net/blog/2017/10/04/ignatian-ecological-examen and ecoexamen.org.
- Catholic Energies: catholicenergies.org

